

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-7 and 30-36 are currently pending. Claim 36 has been amended by the present amendment. The change to Claim 36 is supported by the originally filed specification and does not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claim 36 was objected to as containing an informality; and Claims 1-7 and 30-36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over European Patent Application No. EP 0768582 A1 to Ogura (hereinafter "the '582 application") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,815,652 to Ote et al. (hereinafter "the '652 patent").

In response to the objection to Claim 36, Claim 36 has been amended in the manner suggested in the Office Action. Accordingly, the objection to Claim 36 is believed to have been overcome.

Claim 1 is directed to an image-forming device management system, comprising:  
(1) a plurality of image forming devices; (2) a central service station for providing a maintenance service for the image forming devices; and (3) a communication control unit connected to each of the image forming devices by a signal line, the communication control unit connecting one of the image forming devices to the central service station by a communication network. Moreover, each of the image forming devices is configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit over a predetermined period *through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices* and to display a signal line separation message when the image forming device detects the transmission fault.

Regarding the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 103, the Office Action asserts that the '582 application discloses everything in Claim 1 with the exception of each image forming device being configured to detect a transmission fault through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices, and relies on the '652 patent to remedy that deficiency.

The '582 application is directed to an image forming device management system for managing a plurality of image forming devices using an administrative device connected through a communication control unit to the image forming devices. However, as admitted in the Office Action, the '582 application fails to disclose image forming devices configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices.

The '652 patent is directed to a computer management system that includes an agent 17 connected to a computer to be managed 10 for executing instructions on the computer to be managed 10. Further, the '652 patent discloses that the system includes a service processor board having a processor independent from the computer to be managed 10 for monitoring fault in the computer to be managed 10 and for controlling power to the computer to be managed 10. In addition, the '652 patent discloses that the fault monitor 12111 continuously monitors the fault signal from the housing temperature sensor of the main unit to inform the occurrence of a fault to the fault event generator 12112, and that such faults are logged. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the '652 patent fails to disclose that image forming devices are configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of a central service station and a communication control unit through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices. In particular, Applicants submit that the '652 patent fails to disclose the detection of transmission faults from a central service station or a

communication control unit. Rather, the faults detected by the '652 system are confined to the computer to be managed 10.

Further, Applicants respectfully submit that the "automatic operation management" disclosed by the '652 patent is unrelated to the detection of the transmission faults. The '652 patent discloses that a managing computer may send schedule information to the computer to be managed 10, which then stores the information on a disk and automatically operates in accordance with the schedule information. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the teaching that the '652 system may download a schedule that controls the power-on or power-off times of a computer to be managed is unrelated to the detection of a transmission fault over a predetermined period through a process periodically initiated by an image forming device. Further, Applicants note that Office Action has identified the managing computer 23 and the remote managing computer 27 as reading on the image forming devices recited in Claim 1. However, even assuming that interpretation, Applicants submit that a managing computer sending a schedule to a computer to be managed is not the same as detecting a transmission fault through a periodically initiated process.

Accordingly, no matter how the teachings of the '582 application and the '652 patent are combined, the combination does not teach or suggest that each of the image forming devices is configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit over a predetermined period through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices, as recited in Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established and that the rejection of Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2-6) should be withdrawn.

Claims 7, 30, and 36 recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in Claim 1. Accordingly, for the reasons stated above for the patentability of Claim 1, Applicants

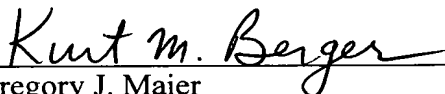
respectfully submit that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established and that the rejection of Claims 7, 30, and 36 (and all associated dependent claims) should be withdrawn.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2-6), Claim 7, Claim 30 (and dependent Claims 31-35), and Claim 36 patentably define over any proper combination of the '582 application and the '652 patent.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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